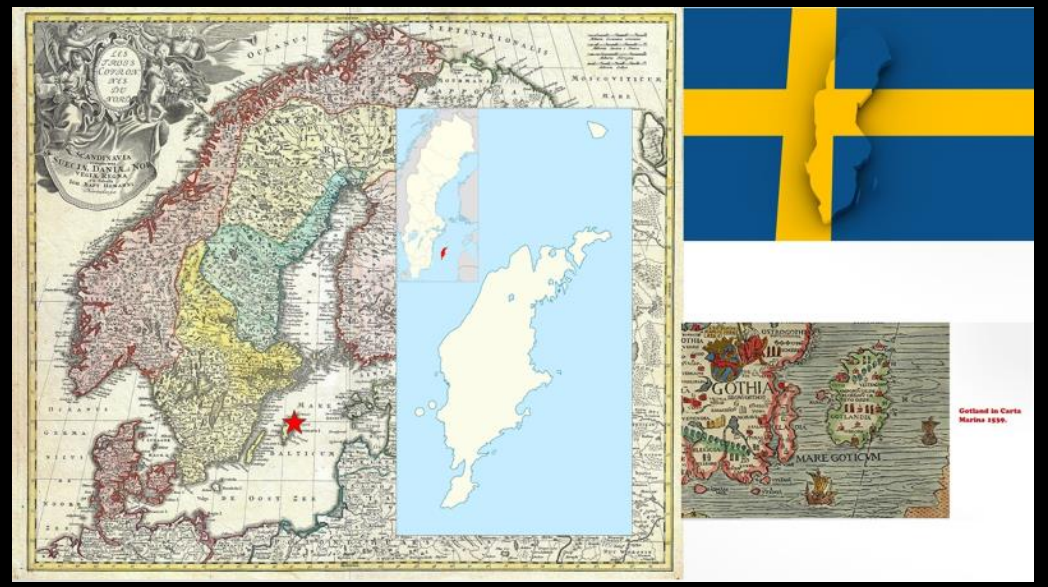
THE BLACK

DEATH IN SWEDEN

SLIDESHOW – ANDERS DERNBACK



BLACK DEATH

1346–1353 spread of the Black Death in Europe map.
The Black Death (Swedish: Digerdöden, 'The Great Death') was present in Sweden between 1350 and 1351. It was a major catastrophe which was said to have killed a third of the population, and Sweden was not to recover fully for three hundred years.

1346 1347 1348 1349 1350 1351 1352 1353

Approximate border between the Principality of Kiev and the Golden Horde - passage prohibited for Christians.

Land trade routes

Maritime trade routes

THE BLACK DEATH IN SWEDEN

The Black Death in Sweden is only mentioned directly in few contemporary documents; in a letter from the king, in a sermon by Saint Bridget of Sweden, in a letter from the city council in Visby to their colleagues in Lübeck, and in a letter from the Pope, replying to a letter from the Swedish king. There is, however, indirect contemporary information, as well as later descriptions of it.

At this point in time, Sweden was in a personal union with Norway under the same monarch, Magnus IV of Sweden.

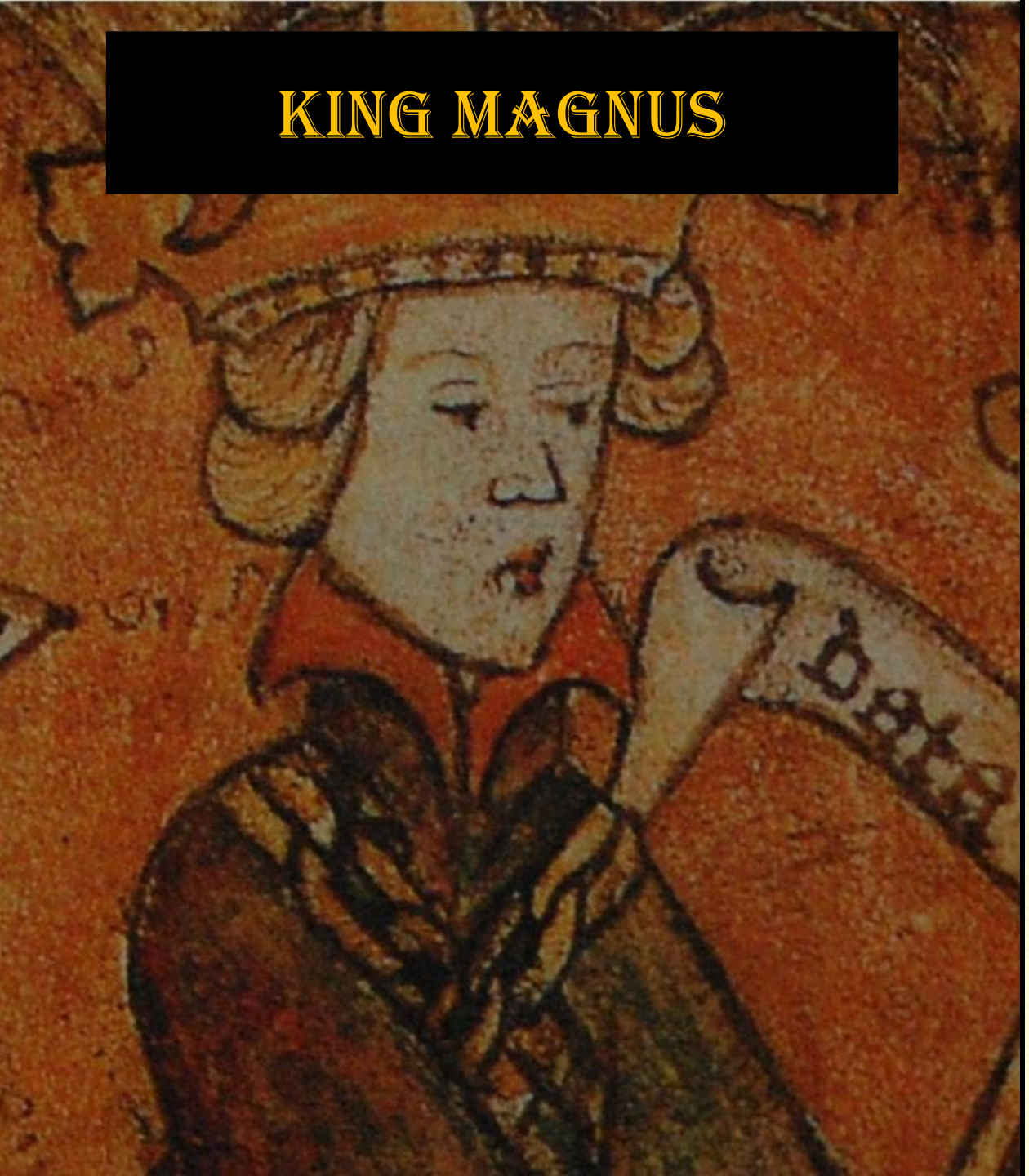
The plague reached Norway by a plague ship from England in the summer of 1349. In the summer of 1350, Sweden was surrounded by plague in Norway to the West and Denmark to the South.

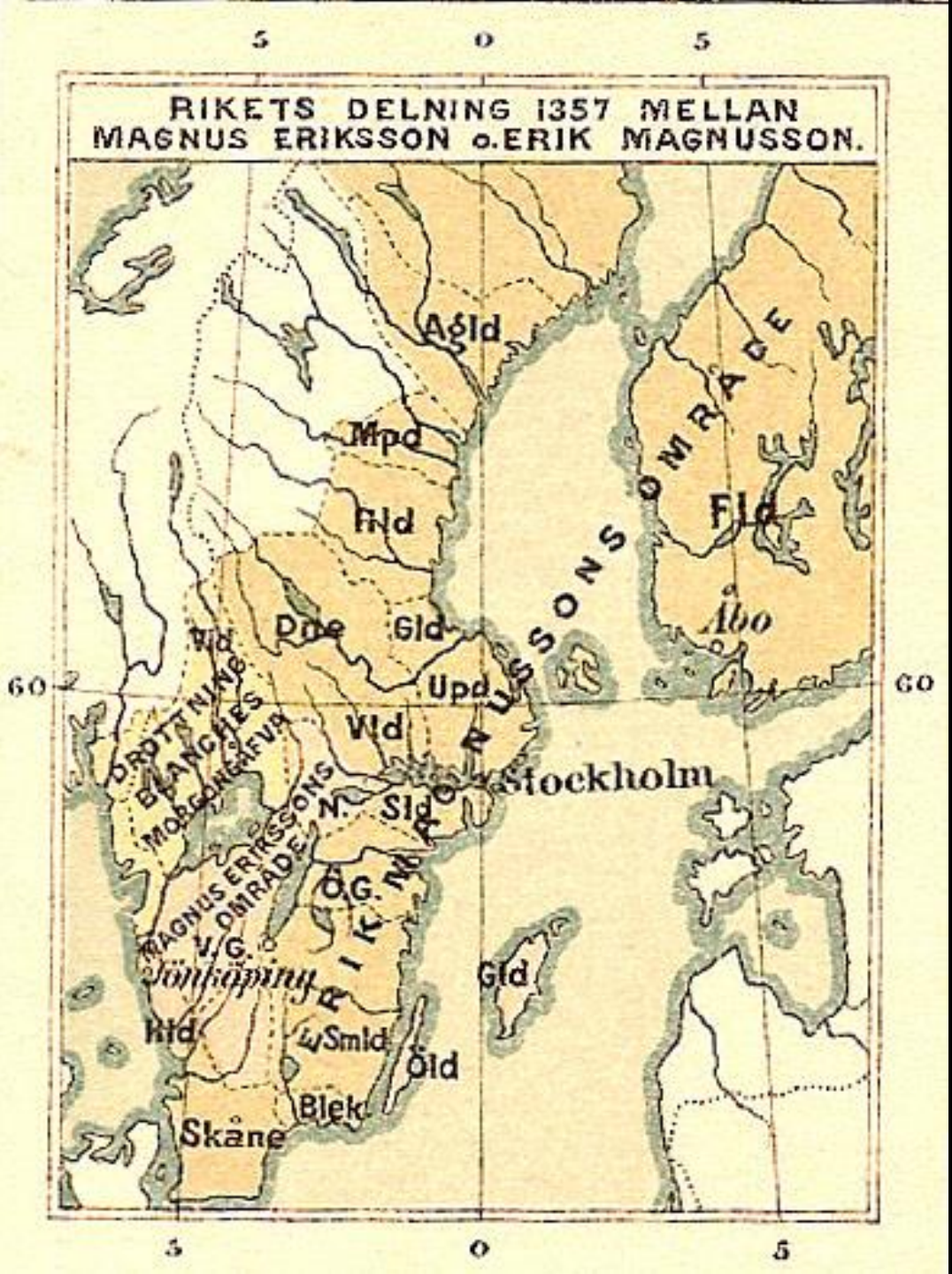
Year 1349 King Magnus issued a Warning

In 1349, king Magnus of Sweden and Norway issued a warning about the plague to his Swedish subjects. While the letter is not dated, it was likely written in Lödöse in September 1349, judging from the known place of residence and other letters issued by the king which has been dated. In the letter, it is clear that the plague had not reached Sweden and that the king issued a royal proclamation of public penance, in an attempt to soften the wrath of God to prevent the Black Death in Norway from reaching Sweden

We proclaim to you, *that we have been given tidings that are truly frightening, and of which every Christian should justly fear; that God has because of the Sins of Man cast a great misery upon the entire world, that of hasty evil death, so that most of the people who lived in the lands West of our land are now dead of that misery and it is now present in all of Norway and Halland and are progressing toward us, so that everywhere in those lands it is so strong that people [with no prior illness] falls down and dies, when a moment ago they were healthy and where ever it progresses not enough people are left who can bury those that die. Now We fear, because of the great love and care we have for you that, because of the Sins of Man, the same misery and death should come over our own subjects."*

KING MAGNUS





SWEDEN YEAR

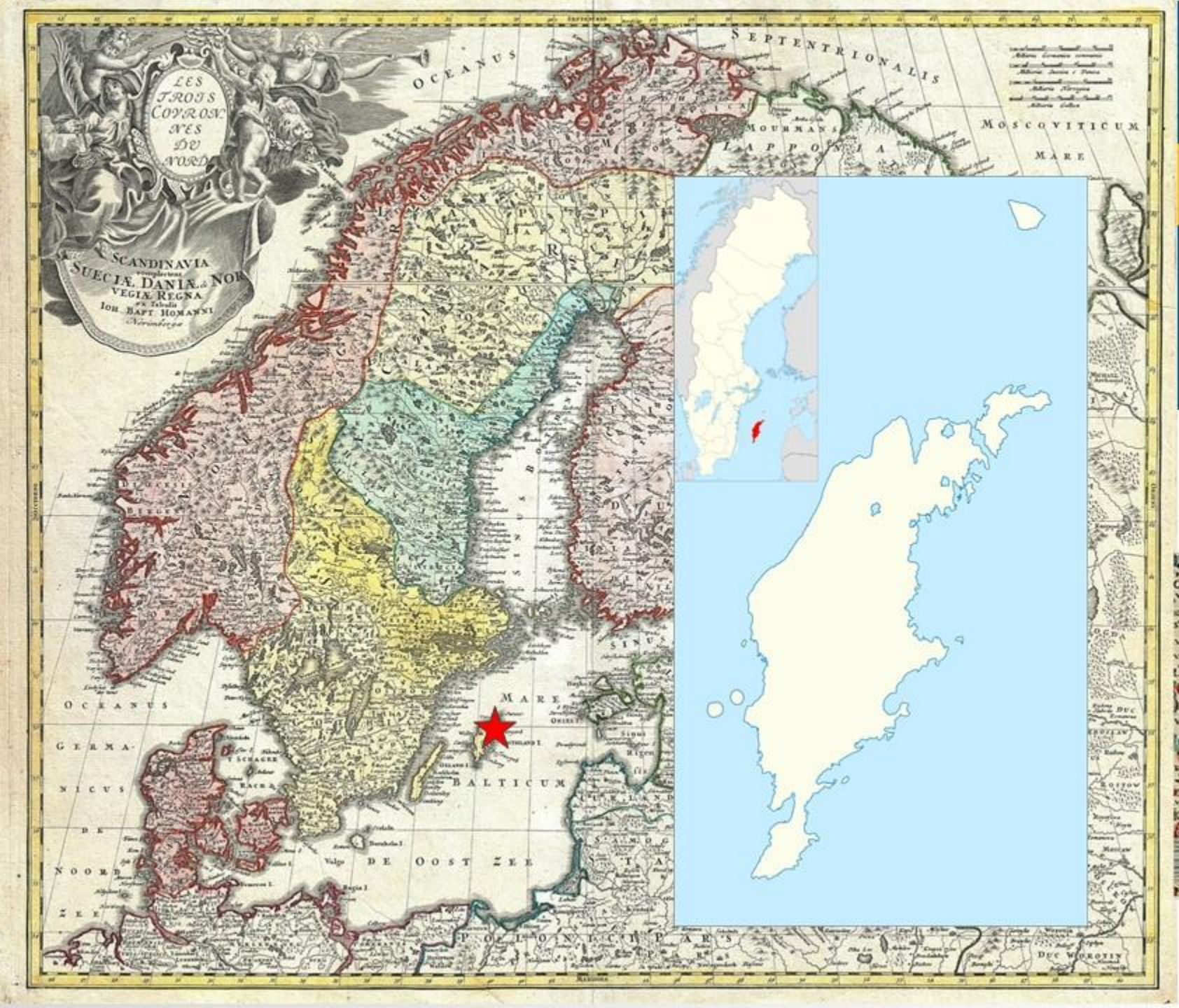
1357

In order to prevent the plague

In order to prevent the plague from reaching Sweden, the king issued several commands. In Europe, the plague was commonly believed to be a punishment from God for the Sins of humanity. Therefore, the commands of the king was of religious nature and designed to lessen the wrath of God. In the public royal letter, which was circulated to the Bishops of the Kingdom, all Swedes regardless of class, age or gender were commanded to regularly attend mass, give alms to the poor, confess and do penance, fast on water and bread every Friday and give what they could to the Virgin Mary, the church and the king.

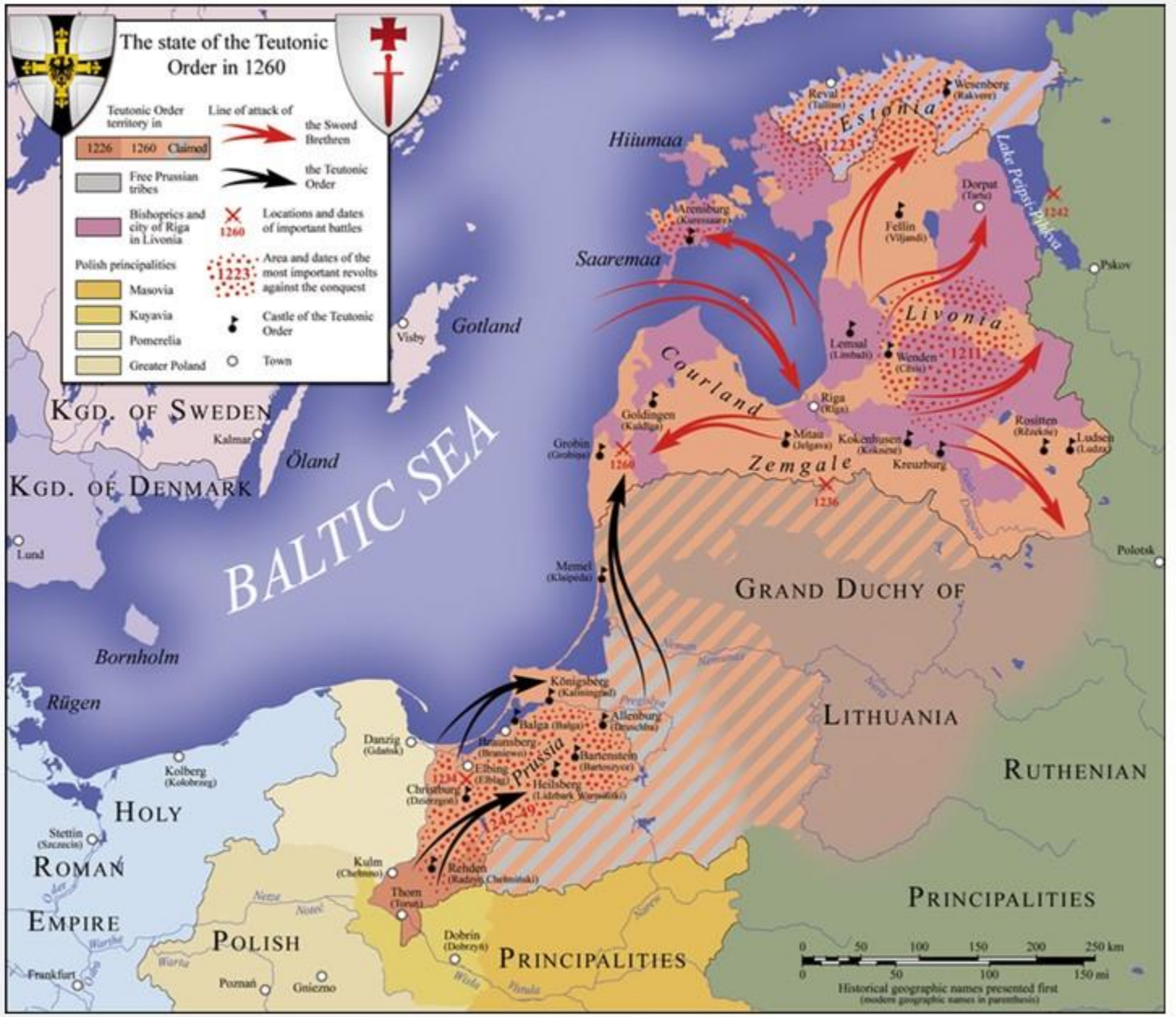
THE BLACK DEATH FIRST APPEARD IN VISBY

The Black Death first appeared in Sweden in the big port city of Visby on Gotland, likely by ship from Denmark or Germany, where it was present in May or at the latest July 1350. In July 1350, nine people was burned in Visby after having confessed under torture that they had caused the plague by poisoning. Two of them were priests who confessed that they had poisoned the mass cloth (which the parishioners kissed during mass) with plague during Whit Monday mass in May, and the other seven were men employed by the church who confessed to having poisoned wells and lakes in Stockholm, Västerås and Arboga and across the Swedish countryside. This case was described in a letter from July 1350 to the city council of Rostock in Germany received a letter from the city council of Visby in SWEDEN



Gotland in Carta Marina 1539.

1399 TYSKA ORDEN



Tyska orden 1260.

REENACTMENT OF KING VALDEMAR'S ENTRANCE INTO VISBY

MEDIEVAL WEEK IN GOTLAND

Every year, during the Medieval Week in Gotland, a historical reenactment of King Valdemar IV of Denmark's entrance and ransoming of Visby is staged at the historical site. Since 2011, the Battle of Visby itself is reenacted outside the Visby city wall with participants from historical societies from several European countries and the United State

During the summer 1350 the plague spread

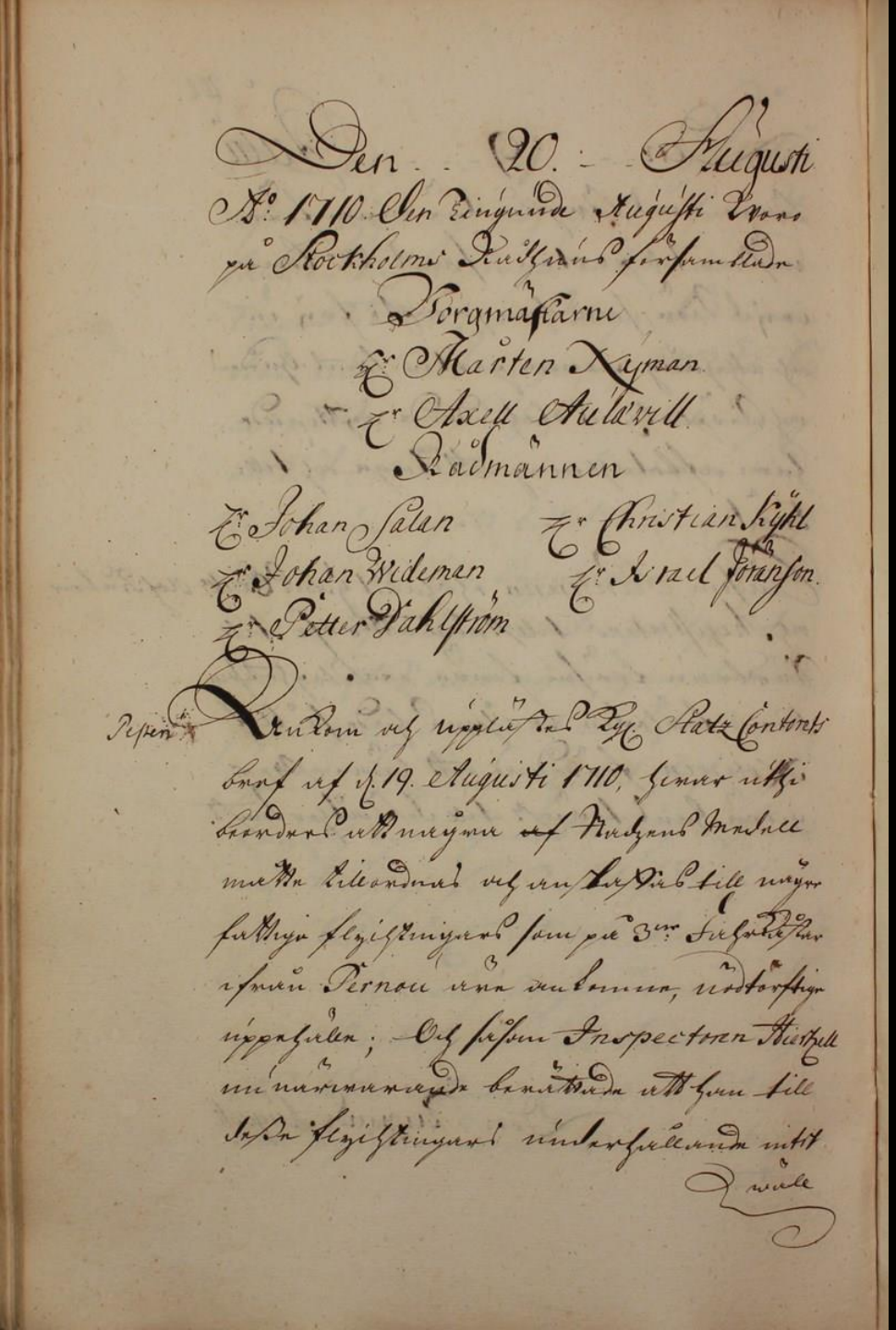
During the summer and autumn: from Småland and Östergötland to Närke and Uppland between August and December 1350, with a presence in Stockholm and Uppsala in August. The progress of the plague in Western and Northern Sweden is not as clearly visible. I September 1350, the plague was present in eastern Norway along the Western border of Sweden, in Norwegian Jämtland North of Sweden, and in Danish Skåne south of the Swedish border, making it likely to have reached Western Sweden from Norway slightly later, in the autumn of 1350. Northern Sweden is completely unknown it this respect, but it is noted that the colonization of the Torne Valley stopped suddenly in the 14th century and did not resume for two centuries.

Demand for Workers

The great loss of lives contributed to higher demands from the surviving workers upon the elite, who responded with refusals and attempts at greater repression, which resulted in great social tensions. This was common for many countries after the Black Death. These events are not as documented in Sweden as elsewhere. A donation of a property from Lady Margareta, the widow of Avid of Risnäs, and her son Stefan to the Linköping Cathedral in 13 June 1353, is a rare example of this, as the document clearly states that they had to sell the property for a much lower price than its actual worth

THE BLACK DEATH would return regularly, but with fewer death victims, until the 18th century. Sweden was reached also by the second and third European Black Death epidemic of **1359–1360** and **1368–1370**. The second wave of Black Death in Sweden in 1359 is known to have caused the death of the Crown Prince, his consort Beatrice of Bavaria, and their children. The plague also returned in repeated national epidemics in **1413, 1421–22, 1439–40, 1451, 1455, 1464–65, 1472–74 and 1495**. Of these, the plague of **1413,** 1420–22 and 1464-66 are described as particularly severe.

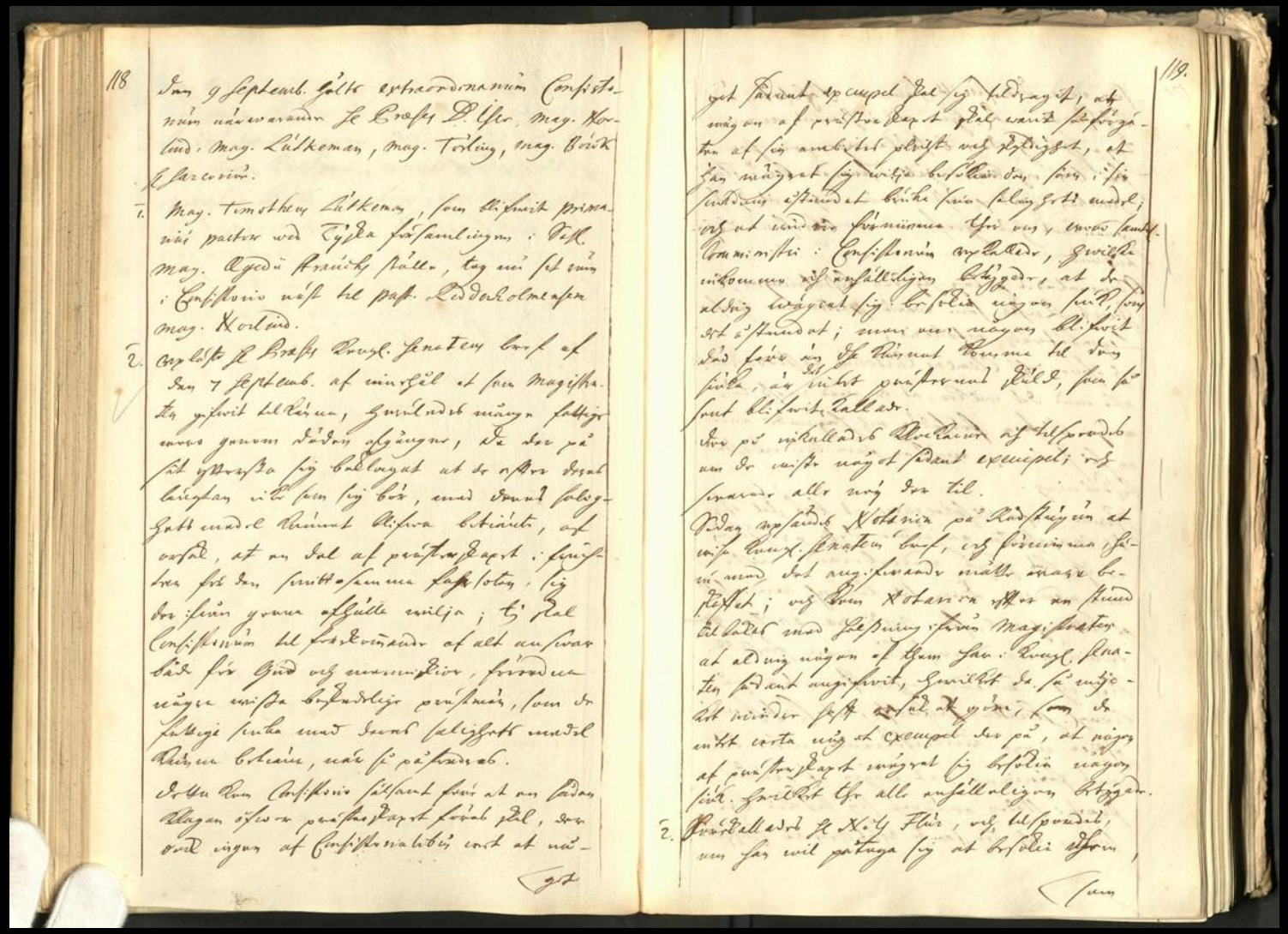
AFTER THE MIDDLE AGES, the plague returned in **1548–49, 1565–66, 1572, 1576, 1580, 1603, 1623, 1629–30, 1638, 1653 and 1657**, before the Great Northern War plague outbreak in **1710–1713**, which was to be the last outbreak of BUBONIC PLAGUE IN SWEDEN.



STOCKHOLM 1710

During the summer of 1710, some type of epidemic broke out in Stockholm. The state authorities were secret for a long time, but pretty soon rumors began to flourish about what had hit the city, namely the plague.

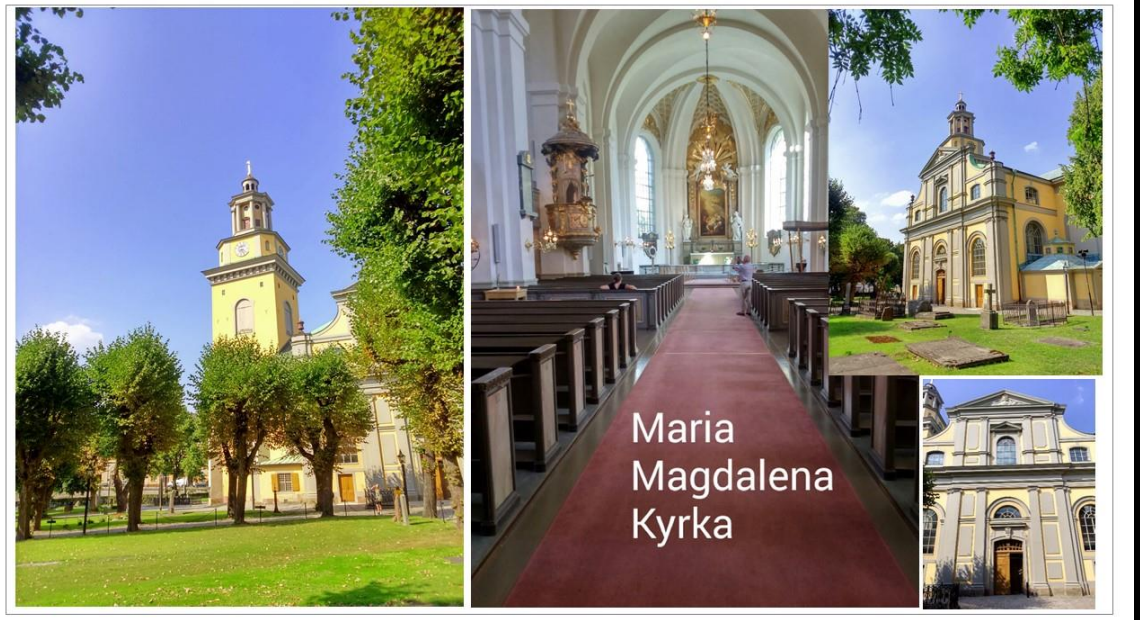
The first note about the plague is written in a civil protocol in the City Magistrate and City Hall Court on 20 August. A letter has been received from the State Treasury, urging the city to help the poor refugees from Pärnu in Estonia, who came to Stockholm earlier this summer by ship.



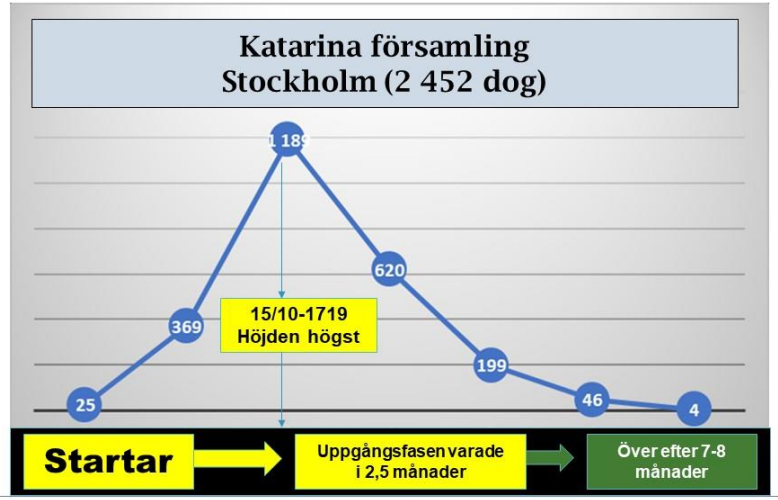
STOCKHOLM 1710

On September 9, the year of the plague in 1710, the city's church board Consistorium meets. Item two on the agenda is about poor people who on the deathbed should have been denied their means of salvation by priests, priests who were afraid of becoming infected.

In the cathedral congregation (Old Town), Pastor Magister Slagman announced that a third of his congregation, including the bell ringer and cantor, had died. And in Barnhusförsamlingen, which consisted of Allmänna Barnhuset and Smedjegårdshäktet, a quarter of the children had died as well as a large number of prisoners.

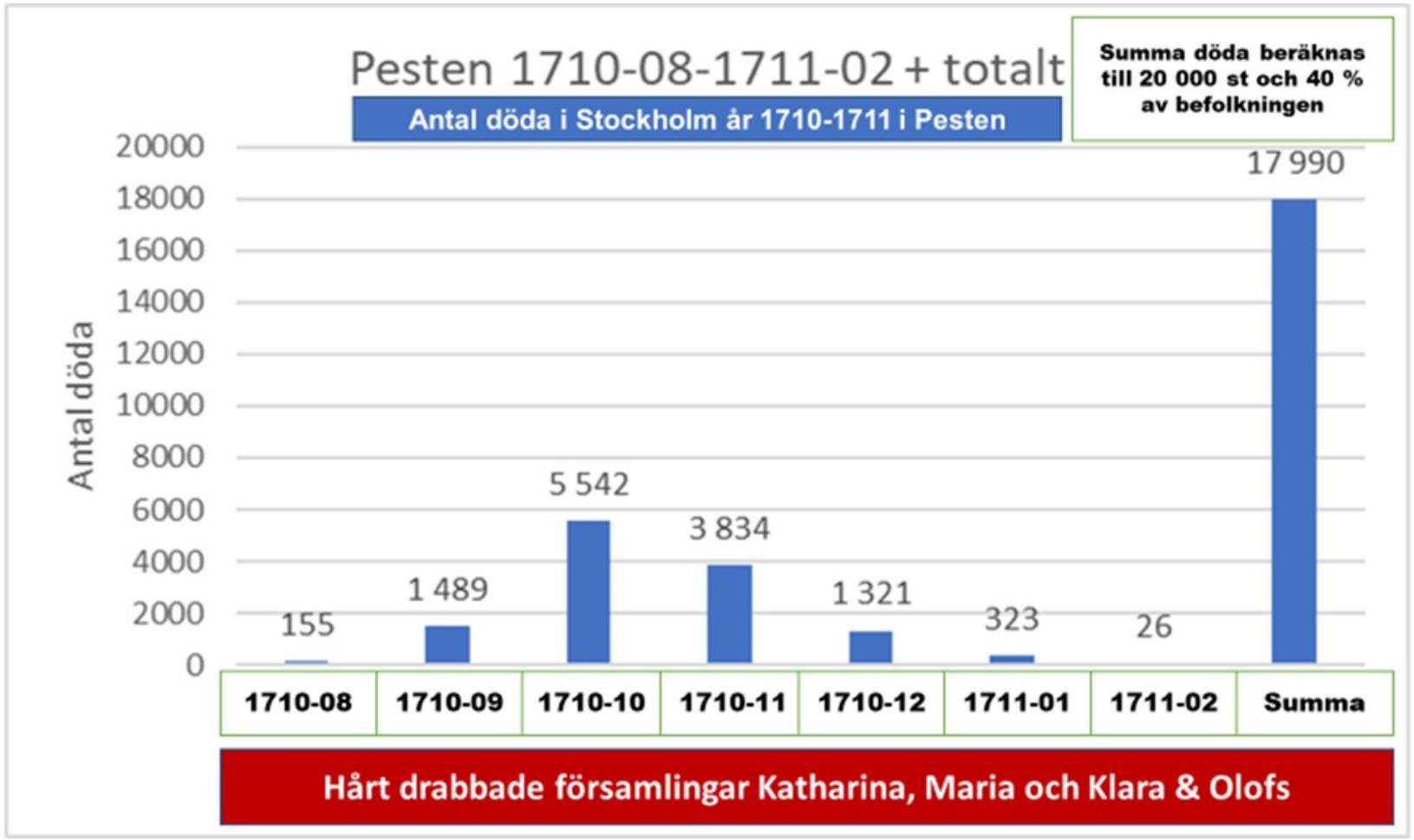


En mardröm över 8 månader, då Pesten kom i augusti 1710 och sedan nästan inga nya fall februari 1711



2 452 DEAD IN KATARINA CHURCH CONGREGATION

STOCKHOLM 1710 - 1711



Number of deaths from the plague in various parishes

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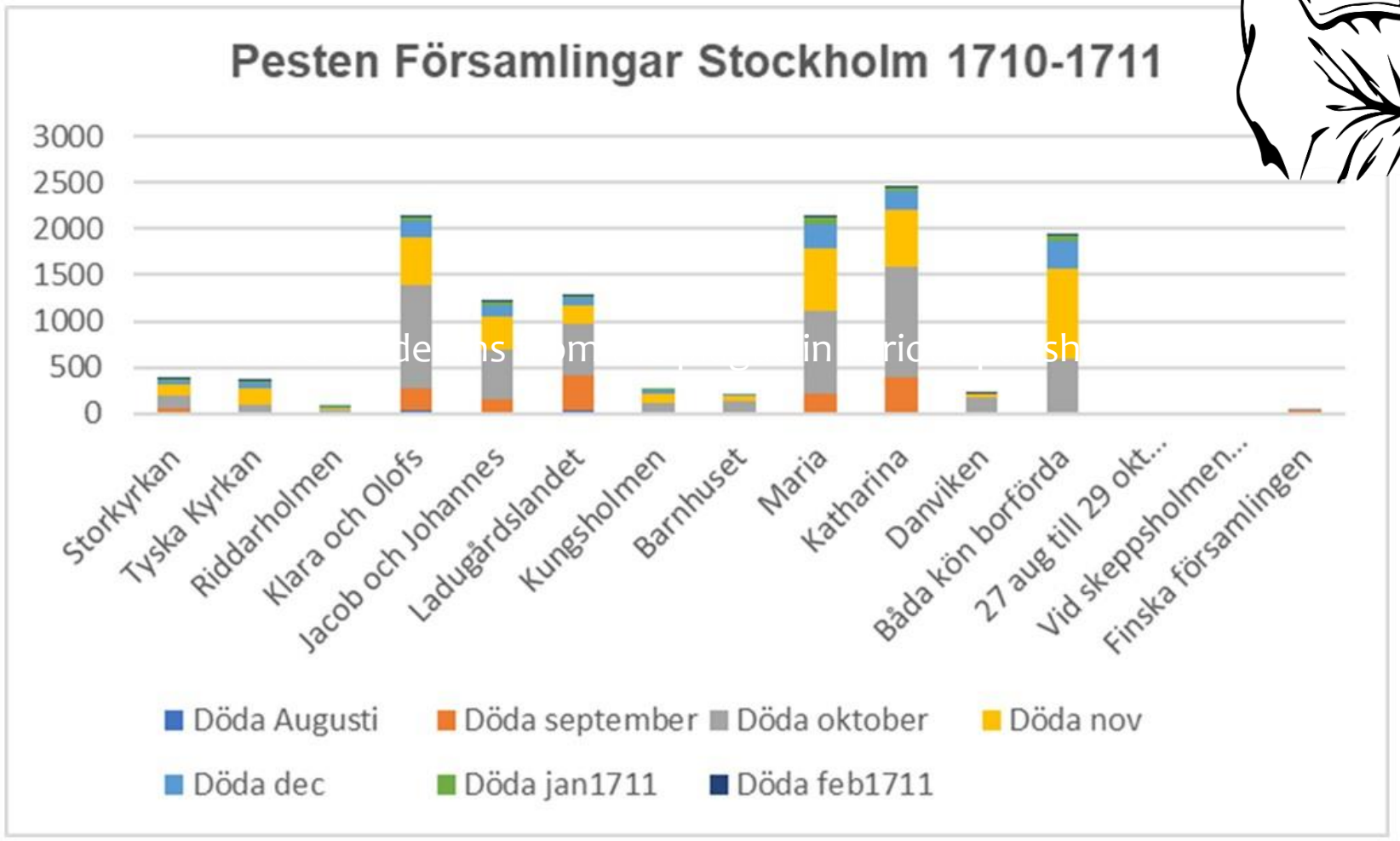

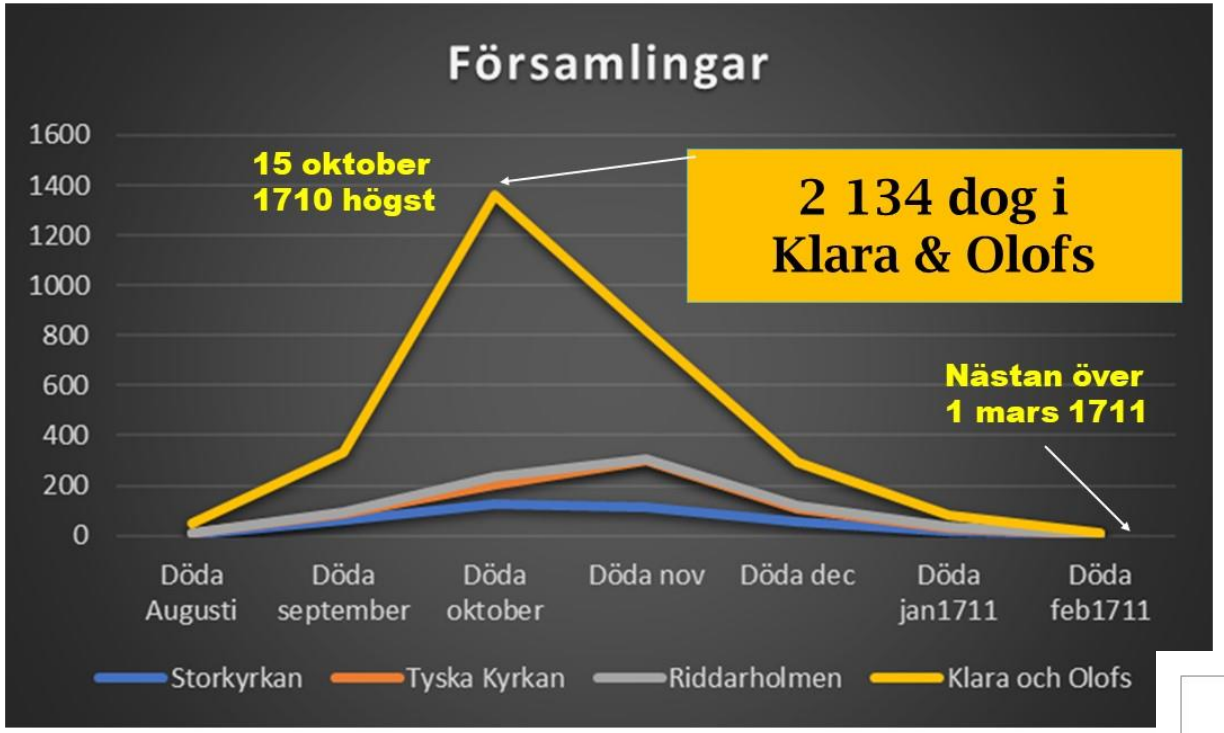
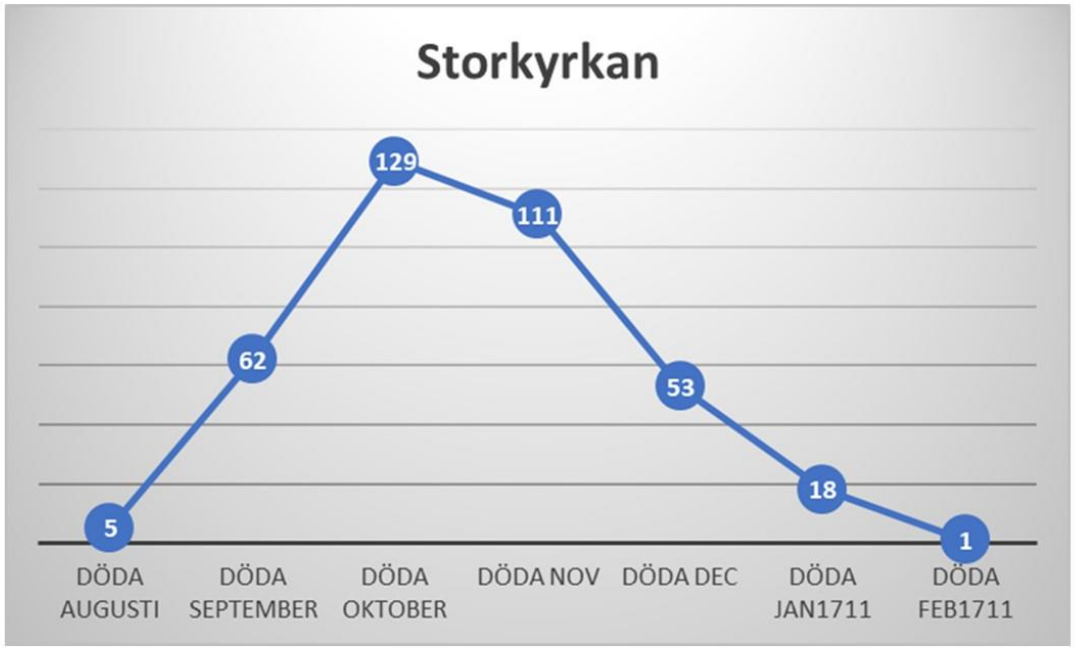
NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM THE PLAGUE IN VARIOUS PARISHES